

The Impact of a Support Group for Mentors

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Abstract

In recent years, mentoring has been recognized by organizations and researchers as having great importance and potential. One of the three major mentoring fields, youth mentoring has been utilized and noted as a source of support and benefit for youth. Although some reviews are conflicted, the literature has largely shown this practice of guiding youth to be effective in helping to produce improved outcomes for children later in life. Researchers have also found evidence for the benefits of mentoring for mentors that can be explained within the context of Erikson's psychosocial theory of development. The program that was studied for this research project was Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia, a mentoring program that matches like-minded children and adults in a guided and monitored relationship. Attempting to illuminate an underdeveloped point of view in the literature, this study sought to uncover the impact of the mentoring process on the mentor. The medium of support group was utilized in an attempt to add communication and enrichment to the mentoring experience and subsequently impact the mentoring process for the mentor. In measurement of stress, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and BBBS program commitment, a paired *t*-test showed a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores on self-esteem only, such that participation in the support group was related to lower self-esteem scores. Implications include development of a gap in the literature and the introduction of a mentor support program with potential benefits to mentors and mentees.

The Impact of a Support Group for Mentors

Mentoring is an age old concept and a topic gaining prevalence and understanding in psychological research (Allen & Eby, 2007). The term mentor is younger than the actual practice of mentoring, and actually originated from the literary classic, Homer's *Odyssey*. Mentor was a companion of the adventurous main character, Odysseus, who demonstrated his loyalty by caring for and teaching Odysseus' son. The portrayal of this character and the popularity of this work helped bring the word mentor into the mainstream, and it is now commonly used in modern research vernacular. The exact definition of mentoring has been challenging to form due to the great variance in what are commonly considered mentoring relationships, but a basic definition would be that a mentor is a guide and a teacher that helps enable an individual to reach his goals through support and challenge.

As identified by the Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring, there are three basic fields of mentoring: academic mentoring, workplace mentoring, and youth mentoring (Allen & Eby, 2007). In each of these three forms, mentoring has been cited as effective and beneficial to those in the one-on-one relationship. Academic mentoring relationships have been recommended as an intervention to facilitate commitment to school, higher grades, self-esteem, decision-making ability, and future employment (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). Workplace mentoring examinations have found correlations between career success and having a mentor (Grima, Paillé, Mejia, & Prud'homme, 2014; Murphy, 1996). Lastly, youth mentoring has been linked to benefits such as increased academic performance and has been referred to as crucial to achieving healthy outcomes in disadvantaged youth (Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, & Hanneman, 2009; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000).

Youth Mentoring

Due to the vast span of the entire mentoring field and the researcher's goal of reaching specific practical applications, this research study focused on only one of the aforementioned three types, youth mentoring. Youth mentoring for the purposes of this study refers to a relationship between a child or young adult and an older adult figure, in which the older adult is involved in the child's life and provides direction in areas such as competency and character development (Langhout, Rhodes, & Osborne, 2004). In addition, the mentor label is not dependent upon mentor performance. Individuals that attempt to fill this role, but fail to be helpful to the child are still considered mentors; although they will be denoted as poor or ineffective.

Mentoring relationships can also be defined as formal or informal and occur in a variety of contexts (Grima, et al., 2014). Informal mentoring relationships take place naturally in a child's life. Possibly without a concerted effort to find a mentor, the child happens upon an older adult, such as a coach or teacher that invests in his life and becomes a source of support and direction for him. Alternatively, formal mentoring relationships entail a purposeful search for a mentor through referral by someone other than the child and takes place within the confines of an established mentoring program. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS), which will be discussed later, is an example of such a program. This type of mentoring is more structured and regulated when compared to informal mentoring. Participants may be required to sign contracts or spend a designated amount of time together each month (Tierney, et al., 2000). Both types of mentoring may occur in a number of different settings, such as in school or in the community. Another similarity between informal and formal mentoring that differentiates youth mentoring

from academic and workplace mentoring is that youth mentoring relationships are normally initiated or otherwise affected by parents and caregivers (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005).

Informal youth mentoring could be said to have existed from the beginning of society, as extended family members and community members have traditionally had an influence on the development of children and adolescents. The current prevalence of sports and education has provided two major avenues of informal youth mentoring, as many young people indicate that they look to their teachers or coaches for guidance (Chen, Greenberger, Farruggia, Bush, & Dong, 2003). With this trending prevalence and the continued involvement of extended family and community members, informal mentoring is gaining traction in a socially conscious society saturated with resources.

Inevitably, formal youth mentoring has much more recent roots (Freedman, 1992). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, social crusades in the United States aimed at helping children and adolescents living in destitute poverty served as the first steps to the youth mentoring that exists today. One such charitable effort, referred to as the Friendly Visiting movement, was orchestrated by members of the middle class who made an effort to provide support, companionship, and guidance to the impoverished in their communities. An additional contribution to the development of youth mentoring were endeavors to understand and assist juvenile delinquents. Jane Addams and others believed juvenile delinquency to be caused by lack of resources and negative environmental influences, which they chose to combat by founding the first juvenile court in the United States. Addams and her associates acted as probation officers, caretakers, and role models for many young men and women, creating what some consider the first wave of organized youth mentoring for underprivileged children and adolescents in the nation. These provisional measures were revolutionary and inspiring to others, eventually

functioning as a catalyst for the development of the BBBS of America program that is currently the face of formal youth mentoring.

Mentoring and Theory

In analysis of the literature and related psychological theories, youth mentoring is related to Erikson's theory of life course development (Murphy, 1996; Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002). Erikson's work in particular sheds light on the recent increased interest in the subject of mentoring, as it is likely in part a result of the transition of the baby boom generation to middle and older age. While past research identifying mentorship as beneficial has been cited for the increase in the volume of studies on the subject, Erikson's theory could be used to assert that this trend is due to the entrance of a large portion of the American population into the developmental stage of stagnation versus generativity, a stage characterized by a yearning to give back to the younger generation (Imada, 2004; Murphy, 1996).

Stages of Psychosocial Development

Notably a psychoanalytically-influenced, stage-structured theory of development, Erikson is responsible for constructing what is likely the most widely known theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1989; Tan, 2011). According to this theory, the development and maturation of individuals requires the confrontation and resolution of eight separate stages of development. This maturation is also heavily based on the interaction between an individual's internal cognitive processes and his external social environment (Tan, 2011). Each stage contains a major conflict that an individual must resolve by his own means and with the help of others before successfully progressing to the subsequent stage. Since these stages are more representative of mental age than of physical age, all individuals progress at their own pace and may not experience all eight stages.

Using Erikson's progressive stage-like mentality, his theory explains benefits of the mentoring process for those being mentored and for those performing the mentoring (Haensly & Parsons, 1993; Murphy, 1996; Rhodes, 2005). Children and young adults being mentored are in critical stages of their lives, emerged in crises involving industry, identity, and intimacy. Since failure in any one stage is theorized to stall further maturation and progression into the following stages, support is especially important early in a youth's development (Erikson, 1989). A mentor who has completed these stages successfully in his past is an ideal complement and source of guidance for youth in crisis. Conversely, middle and older adults benefit from influencing youth since their developmental stages focus on giving back to the younger generation and reflecting on a life well-lived (Barnett, 1984). An understanding of mentoring through Erikson's theory provides more obvious parallels to benefits for the mentor than the person being mentored; while mentoring is helpful to children and young adult development, it is central to adult satisfaction and maturation. The positive changes that mentoring enacts in the lives of those being mentored combined with mentoring's tendency to enhance the self-image of the mentor bodes well for the older adult attempting to successfully achieve intimacy, generativity, and integrity (Barnett, 1984; Haensly & Parsons, 1993). To this effect, mentoring provides loving relationships, opportunities to nurture, and feelings of accomplishment and social satisfaction that help young, middle, and older adults combat the developmental pitfalls of isolation, stagnation, and despair.

Benefits of Youth Mentoring

Benefits for Youth

With strong ties to psychological theory, youth mentoring has been met with mostly positive reviews and its potential has been noted by a plethora of researchers (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). This potential is especially relevant considering population statistics that

evidence the gradual, steady deterioration of the family unit, a trend that has forced more children to look outside of their household for guidance. As an example, the differences in living arrangements for children and youth from 1960 to 2014 are quite staggering. Less than 70% of youth live in a family where both parents are present; this is a fall of nearly 20% over the past 54 years (United, 2014). The number of children that live with only their mother has plateaued in recent years, but still represents an increase of over 10% since 1960. In comparison, children living with just their father has climbed steadily and is now approaching 5%. When this statistic is broken down by marital status, an alarming amount of children live with mothers who were never married, nearly 50% in 2014 compared to roughly 5% in 1960. Besides this extreme increase, the trend of children living with never married mothers has climbed sharply and steadily in recent years. Children with never married fathers represents a much smaller percentage but has been increasing since 2006. These statistics indicate instability in the families of today, an issue that youth mentoring attempts to solve by providing support and companionship to children in disadvantageous circumstances (Tierney, et al., 2000).

Benefits for youth typically fall into one of three categories, academics, social functioning, and emotional and behavioral regulation (Dubois, et al., 2002). In the area of academics, youth mentoring has been linked to improved grades and commitment to school. A relationship with a supportive adult who is encouraging about academics increases an individual's positivity in connection to school. In the social arena, mentoring can help youth develop social skills necessary for their future development. An experimental study by Kessler & Staudinger, 2007 linked adolescent interaction with older adults to increases in prosocial behavior. In the areas of emotional and behavioral regulation, experiencing mentoring has been correlated with improved behavior and increased coping skills (Hurd, Varner, & Rowley, 2013).

One study found that adolescent mothers who were mentored displayed lessened depressive symptoms and increased life satisfaction, as well as greater relational competency (Rhodes, Contreras, & Mangelsdorf, 1994). In the areas of behavior and emotion, mentoring has been associated with improved response to stress and less behavior problems in school (Tierney, et al., 2000). One study found that youth with a mentor were less likely to engage in substance abuse and more likely to use contraceptives. Behavioral and emotional regulation can also reverberate into health-related benefits. For example, research has shown health-related risky behaviors to be less common in youth who have a relationship with an adult that cares for them. Supportive relationships with adults have also been linked to resilience (Thompson, Corsello, McReynolds, & Conklin-Powers, 2013).

Benefits for mentors

The focus of studies on mentoring has primarily been related to the implications the relationship holds for the person being mentored (Weiler et al., 2013). Erik Erikson, prophetic of the current research gap, once stated that the dependence of middle and older aged adults on youth is completely shadowed by the popular focus on children's dependence on adults (Murphy, 1996). While this focus is viable and of great value, the reciprocation of the mentoring relationship and effects on the mentor should also be noted. Specialized attention to the mentor's perspective has the potential to increase the incidence of mentoring relationships. In light of this gap in the research and the prospects of mentor-focused study, this research effort concentrated on the effects that mentoring enacts in the life of the youth mentor.

As stated earlier, mentoring and youth mentoring more specifically, are emerging topics in psychological research (Allen & Eby, 2007). Concerning BBBS specifically, only a handful of studies have been performed to determine its effectiveness, none of which have made a strong

effort to address mentor benefits (Tierney et al., 2000). While this theme is common and research on mentors themselves is underdeveloped, this gap has been noted by the literature and a relatively recent push has produced a growing number of writings concerning the benefits of mentoring for the mentor (Weiler et al., 2013).

In a 1996 study, Murphy identified four basic benefit pathways of mentoring for the mentor. While this study considered workplace mentoring, rather than youth mentoring, the four pathways are basic and all-encompassing to a degree that is safely generalizable to other mentoring fields, such as youth mentoring. The benefits described by these four pathways have also been noted by other mentoring researchers (Barnett, 1984; Grima, et al., 2014).

The first of these pathways revolves around the idea that mentoring allows individuals the comfort and satisfaction of continuing a people-helping lifestyle (Murphy, 1996; Barnett, 1984). The social contributions offered by mentoring tend to attract people who are compassionate and are conscious of others wants and needs. Such individuals have helped people in the past, and mentoring provides them an opportunity that they may not have otherwise had to do the same later in life. This sense of continuity is important to an individual's identity which may be challenged in middle and older adulthood.

Second, mentoring positively impacts the mentor's self-image (Grima, et al., 2014; Murphy, 1996). Through guiding someone through crisis and challenge, a mentor feels a sense of accomplishment that leads to beneficial impact to confidence and perceived ability. In addition, this study concluded that mentoring helps the mentor experience the pleasurable sensation of feeling young again (Murphy, 1996). This effect of a positive feel of youthfulness also benefits a mentor's self-image, especially one dealing with sadness or depression linked to increasing age. Moreover, this effect should be especially true of youth mentoring, considering the feeling of

youth was based on the youth of the mentee and recipients of youth mentoring are significantly younger than those in the workplace. In one youth mentoring study, informal mentoring was reported to assist mentors in better understanding their past childhood experiences, showing that mentoring can lead to enhanced self-awareness in the mentor (Murphy, 1996).

Third, mentoring contributes to mentor success by facilitating the learning of tasks and addition of networking connections (Grima, et al., 2014; Murphy, 1996). While networking connections may not be the best way to describe connections formed through youth mentoring, beneficial connections in the community can be formed, especially through formal mentoring programs. Also, learning how to mentor is multi-faceted and can help a mentor in a number of ways in his own personal life.

The fourth and final pathway is nearly a combination of the previous three, as Murphy (1996) denoted that it consists of the personal benefits of added influence, practice of skills, validation of wisdom, gratification from a professional family, and exercise of spiritual values. In this pathway, practice of skills and validation of wisdom have particular application to the field of youth mentoring. Through mentoring a youth, a mentor may benefit from practicing new skills or revisiting and improving on skills that have deteriorated over time. Wisdom is also a central piece of the youth mentoring relationship, and a youth's success in connection to a mentor's advice provides validation of this kind.

Difficulties with Mentoring

Although supported by theory and mentee outcome studies, the effectiveness of mentoring programs and mentoring relationships have been challenged (Rhodes, 2002). Murphy (1996) regarded this critical view of mentoring as often ignored by the literature, and his claims remain true. Mentors, individually and as a group, are not infallible. Even great mentors make

mistakes that can have unfortunate consequences, and some mentoring relationships are doomed from the start. Murphy noted that some become mentors for the ill-guided reasons of personal fulfillment and vicarious living. While these two reasons can be part of a healthy mentor motivation, they should not be the focus of the mentor. Instead, the mentor should be primarily focused on helping the youth he is in a relationship with and guiding him towards his goals.

Darling (1986) asserted there were four types of mentors that elicited negative effects in their mentoring relationships. The first type were those who were avoidant of the young men and women they were supposed to be mentoring. Mentors who constantly disappointed their mentees by making promises that they did not keep formed the second type. The third type was a more severe version of the first type, in which individuals actively refused to meet with their protégés and stalled their development. Lastly, being overly critical and excessively challenging was another type of mentoring with detrimental consequences.

These four types touch on some of the main reasons for mentoring relationship turmoil and failure: lack of commitment, inadequate support, and personality conflict (Tierney et al., 2000). Considering the mentor's perspective, broken trust, disappointment, and letting go can be especially difficult. Mentor stress and interest incompatibility can also be factors in the dissolution of a mentoring relationship. Moreover an alarming percentage of organized mentoring relationships disband in less than a year, with the lasting relationships not necessarily bound for a much more distant future.

Four problems with mentoring deserve further attention. The first is trust and relationship issues. Research has cited lack of trust and difficulty with relationships in general to be detrimental to the mentoring relationship (Tierney et al., 2000). Often times, the child is the one experiencing untrustworthy feelings towards the mentor, but the opposite can also be true. In

either case this type of mistrust can prevent the two from developing a healthy and beneficial relationship.

A second issue that may cause a mentoring relationship to fail would be interest incompatibility (Tierney et al., 2000). Interest incompatibility normally becomes a problem when the interests of the mentor fail to overlap with the interests of the child or adolescent he is mentoring. Such a conundrum can lead to boredom, tension, and hostility between the mentor and the child that is harmful to their relationship. While some mentor-child matches are incapable of overcoming a significant incompatibility between interests, steps can be taken in order to overcome such an obstacle. Considering Erickson's psychosocial theory of development mentioned previously intervention focused on the mentor might be most beneficial. For example, educating a mentor in the stage of stagnation versus generativity about the importance of giving back to the younger generation in relation to the personal fulfillment and satisfaction could help a mentor to be more likely to sympathize with the interest of the child. In this way, originally interest and compatibility could be overcome by the development of new interests in the mentor.

A third problem cited in connection with youth mentoring is mentor stress. Mentor stress arises for a number of reasons; it can also be connected to the trust and relationship issues and interest and compatibility previously mentioned. If not remedied, psychological strain on the mentor can lead to overt problems in his relationship with the youth he is mentoring, leading to possible termination of the relationship. The coping skills of the mentor are central to this issue and can be impacted with regard to psychosocial developmental theory (Allen & Eby, 2007). Referring to Erickson's theory, the particular stage of development that the mentor is in could be used to further personalize an intervention.

The fourth and final issue is lack of mentor commitment (Tierney et al., 2000). Also connecting to the previous issues, lack of mentor commitment may be caused by feelings of untrustworthiness, interest incompatibility, and significant stress. On the other hand, however, lack of commitment could be an issue that predates the start of the mentoring relationship. Obviously, lack of mentor commitment can lead to termination of the mentoring relationship due to the mentor dropping out of a formal mentoring program or persistent unavailability in an informal mentoring relationship. Psychosocial developmental theory can be used to explain the origin of the lack of commitment as well as design a potential intervention for the subject (Rhodes, 2005). Similar to the proposed intervention for interest compatibility, it may be helpful to educate the mentor on the importance of generativity in relation to personal fulfillment.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

This research effort focused on a youth mentoring organization praised for its effectiveness and extensive infrastructure, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. The origin of this organization can be found with a New York City court clerk's charitable efforts towards young boys in his community (Big, 2014). Ernest Coulter formed the Big Brothers Association in the early 1900's, a volunteer effort to invest in young men by spending time with them and guiding them away from trouble and towards success in life. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was formed in 1977 by a union of Coulter's organization with Big Sisters International. Through life changing results and support from prominent figures, such as President Coolidge, President Roosevelt, President Clinton, President Bush, and President Obama, the agency has become the most popular and successful youth mentoring program with agencies in 50 states and 12 countries internationally (Big, 2014). Yet even with this vast expansion, today the mission

remains the same; BBBS exists and has existed to enact positive change in the lives of young men and women by taking advantage of the powerful impact that mentoring affords (Big, 2014).

Although the organization's mission has not wavered, the infrastructure has changed significantly. Over time the BBBS system has become increasingly integrated and structured in its form. Currently, BBBS is operated by a scaffold of employees and leaders from the executive team and board of directors to field office workers and match support specialists. The mentoring agency also includes a two-part division between the site-based program and community based-program. These programs differ in their setting, as site-based mentoring takes place within the confines of a school or after-school program, and community-based mentoring occurs in the child's home or other local community location. Level of involvement is also a differentiating factor between the two due to the fact that community-based mentoring allows for greater freedom for the adult (*Big*) in time spent with the child (*Little*) and greater involvement in a *Little's* life. These divisions and increases in organizational complexity were necessary to keep up with the growing number of participants and volunteers and have been designed to provide the best experience for all parties involved (Tierney et al., 2000). Admittedly, BBBS is not bereft of the aforementioned struggles related to the mentoring process, but the organization operates successfully and provides a well-organized and structured basis for research on the mentoring relationship.

Concerning improving BBBS, suggestions of enhancements to the BBBS program through additional match support and mentor training were made by Tierney et al., 2000. One possible amendment to the BBBS system could be a support and discussion group for mentors. Such a group could foster creativity and problem solving skills while providing encouragement, assistance, guidance, stress relief, and informal mentor training.

The areas of impact just mentioned are not coincidental. Each positive effect produced by the involvement in a support group correlates with a negative potential effect. One study assessing the effectiveness of support groups for kinship caregivers addressed the reality of caregiver stressors, such as conflict with the child, decreased leisure time, and pressures on resources (Strozier, 2012). This study also found that support groups for kinship caregivers can result in the advantageous effect of enhanced social support. This benefit was achieved through a supportive networking effect between the active members of the support group.

In a large, randomized sample of over 700 caregivers, one study also indicated the beneficial nature of support groups (Thurman, Jarabi & Rice, 2012). This study took place in Africa and included caregivers of an at-risk population of children. In the experimental design of this study, those who were participants of the support group fared better in a number of areas than those caregivers who did not participate. In particular improvements for participating caregivers were cited in the areas of a feeling of belonging to the community, family cohesiveness, and increased compassion to the children under their care. These effects also combine to indicate that support group participation reduced stress in the caregivers who participated. Children under the attention of caregivers who visited the support group also experienced benefits in comparison to the children who did not attend the support group. For example, these children demonstrated better behavior and more prosocial tendencies. This would indicate that the support group aided the caregivers in becoming better at caring for their children and addressing problem issues. Depression, hopelessness, and psychological distress were also noted as areas of impact in children whose caregivers attended the support group. Support groups for caregivers have also been successful in improving participant's self-esteem and social support (Kaye & Applegate, 1993). This research is relevant due to the similarities shared

between mentors and traditional caregivers, as mentors also serve a caregiving-type role and share many of the same stressors as caregivers.

Method

Even with evidence for the positive influence of support groups for caregivers, the combination of support group and BBBS mentoring was still unprecedented, and thus research on relevant topics was used to make hypotheses of possible areas and methods of impact to participants in this study. Theoretical frameworks were also considered. Bearing in mind that match compatibility issues arise largely due to the mentee's disapproval of the activities scheduled by the mentor, a support group could help resolve such conflict by providing a mentor with others to share their point of view and ideas about what may be an enjoyable and beneficial joint activity for the mentor and mentee. Members of the support and discussion group could also give advice based on the successes and failures they have personally underwent in gaining their mentee's trust. Such enriching discussions could also lead to gains in the mentor's commitment and program satisfaction, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and stress coping.

Hypotheses

1. Post-test self-esteem scores will be significantly different from pre-test self-esteem scores.
2. Post-test self-efficacy scores will be significantly different from pre-test self-efficacy scores.
3. Post-test stress scores will be significantly different from pre-test stress scores.
4. Post-test program satisfaction scores will be significantly different from pre-test program satisfaction scores.

Participants

A total of four youth mentors was recruited; all were female and between the ages of 18 and 25. This was a largely homogeneous sample, as three of the four participants were of the same race (white) and all four were of similar ages ($M = 21.250$, $SD = 2.180$). Also, all participants were students at a large Christian university and official members of the BBBS program.

Procedure

The intention of this endeavor was to carry out a study of participants which are current members of a well-established mentoring system, the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia program. A list of phone numbers and emails of potential participants were provided by a staff member of BBBS of Central Virginia, and those on the list were contacted and recruited using phone or email. The participants experienced regular, structured meetings with other mentors. Meetings took place every other week on Liberty University's campus and lasted for one hour. The study took place approximately over a six month span from September to February. During the meetings, discussions were led concerning each mentor's previous and current experiences with their Little Brother or Little Sister. Concerns with participation in the program were addressed along with recounts of positive and ideal involvements. While discussion was centrally focused on issues related to the practicality of being a Big Brother or Big Sister, deeper issues were not neglected. This openness to discussion is in accordance with a more traditional support group mentality and was intended to provide the most enriching experience for the mentors participating (Strozier, 2012).

This study was approved by the institutional review board at the university of the participants studied. In order to assess the effects of the support and discussion group on the

participants, self-report measures of stress, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and program satisfaction, were obtained at the start and end of the six month program. At the conclusion of the study, pre-test and post-test scores on those four variables were analyzed to determine whether the support and discussion group had a statistically significant effect on the participants. Demographics of each participant were also measured in order to determine further correlations or confounding variables.

Measures

Participants were surveyed according to four main variables: stress, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and program satisfaction. These constructs have been noted in previous research as central in the mentoring process and in relation to BBBS match success and maintenance (Tierney et al., 2000).

Perceived Stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was used to measure stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). This measure of stress was chosen due to its wide-usage and popularity in the psychological measurement community. The 10-item version of the test was used due to its higher levels of reliability in a review of 12 studies in which the scale was used (Lee, 2013). This study found the PSS 10-item to have a high value of internal consistency reliability in all 12 of the studies examined ($r > .70$). Test-retest reliability was also sufficient ($r > .70$) in all four studies which used a test-retest format. Concerning validity, scores on the PSS are consistent with scores on other measures of stress, self-reported health and health services measures, health behavior measures, smoking status, and help seeking behavior (Cohen, et al., 1983). Additionally, PSS results were correlated with failure to quit smoking, failure among diabetics to control blood sugar levels, greater vulnerability to stressful life-event-elicited depressive symptoms, and greater susceptibility to the common cold. In the current study,

Cronbach's alpha was calculated at .68. Items on the PSS are scored using a 5 point Likert scale ranging from never to very often, with a possible total score range of 0 to 40. A sample question from the PSS is "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?"

Interpretations of PSS scores are made by comparing participant scores to the established averages for different demographics. The applicable comparative statistics for this study included the female population ($M = 13.7$, $SD = 6.6$), white population ($M = 12.8$, $SD = 6.2$), and 18-29 population ($M = 14.2$, $SD = 6.2$) (Cohen & Williamson, 1988).

Self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was used to measure self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). This self-esteem measure is the most widely used and has accordingly been reviewed and analyzed by numerous studies (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). The consensus of such efforts is that the RSE should continue to be used due to its validity and reliability. Alpha reliabilities on the RSE have been found to be in the range of .72 to .88. Concerning its validity, the RSE is consistent with other self-esteem and self-worth measures and has now become the standard to which other measures of self-esteem are compared. The RSE is scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree with a total of 10 items. The minimum score is 10 and the maximum score is 40 ($M = 32.21$, $SD = 5.01$) (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). A sample question from the RSE is "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated at .75.

Self-efficacy. The General Self-Efficacy Form (GSE) was used to measure self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Various studies examining the GSE have concluded that the measure has a high level of reliability, with KR-20 coefficients fluctuating from .65 to .84 (Lennings, 1994). The GSE also has convergent validity with other similar measures and is accredited by its wide usage in the field of career counseling. The GSE consists of 10 items

scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from not at all true to exactly true. The minimum total score is 10 and the maximum total score is 40. Interpreting scores the GSE involves comparing participant scores to the established averages for different demographics. Previous research has established $M = 29.48$ and $SD = 5.13$ for the American adult population. A sample question from the GSE is “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.” In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated at .67.

Program Satisfaction. An existing BBBS Survey, obtained from a staff member at BBBS of Central Virginia was used to measure program satisfaction. While this measure does not have explicit documented reliability and validity, it is widely used by the largest youth mentoring agency in America. The agency’s commitment to using this survey as a tool of assessment for mentor program satisfaction indicates that this survey is an accurate and well-established measure of BBBS program satisfaction. It must be noted that this qualitative survey was analyzed quantitatively for the purposes of this study. The researcher developed a scoring system based on basic research experience, BBBS program-specific experience, and analysis of the literature. In this conversion to quantitative scoring, one of the original 15 questions was not included, as it was categorically dissimilar to the rest and did not directly relate to program satisfaction. Each of the 14 items was scored by a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13 were reverse scored, and the sum of the 14 items resulted in a maximum total of 70 and a minimum total of 14. According to these boundaries, the following score interpretations were developed: 14-28 (Highly Unsatisfied), 29-41 (Unsatisfied), 42-55 (Satisfied), 56-70 (Highly Satisfied). A sample question from the BBBS survey is “I expected that being a mentor would be more fun than it actually is.” In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated at .25.

Results

To test the null hypotheses that pre-test and post-test means of PSS scores, RSE scores, GSE scores, and BBBS survey scores were equal, a paired samples t -test was performed for each of the four variables. There was not a significant difference between the pre-test scores on the PSS ($M = 13.500$, $SD = 2.380$) and the post-test scores on the PSS ($M = 13.750$, $SD = 7.136$); $t(3) = -0.085$, $p = 0.937$. These results suggest that the support and discussion group did not have a significant impact on the stress levels of the participants in this study. There was a significant difference between the pre-test scores on the RSE ($M = 32.667$, $SD = 3.697$) and the post-test scores on the RSE ($M = 28.667$, $SD = 3.317$); $t(3) = 3.286$, $p = 0.046$. These results suggest that the support and discussion group significantly decreased the self-esteem of the participants in this study. There was not a significant difference between the pre-test scores on the GSE ($M = 33.250$, $SD = 3.948$) and the post-test scores on the GSE ($M = 31.750$, $SD = 2.363$); $t(3) = 1.732$, $p = 0.182$. These results suggest that the support and discussion group did not have a significant impact on the self-efficacy of the participants in this study. There was not a significant difference between the pre-test scores on the BBBS survey ($M = 45.000$, $SD = 3.162$) and the post-test scores on the BBBS survey ($M = 44.500$, $SD = 4.203$); $t(3) = 0.225$, $p = 0.836$. These results suggest that the support and discussion group did not have a significant impact on BBBS program satisfaction of the participants in this study.

Table 1
Selected Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics for Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Stress, and Program Satisfaction for a Sample of College Students.

	Mean	SD
Self-esteem	32.667	3.697
Self-efficacy	33.250	3.948
Stress	13.500	2.380
Program Satisfaction	45.000	3.162

Table 2

Selected Post-Test Descriptive Statistics and T-Test Results for Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Stress, and Program Satisfaction for a Sample of College Students.

	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Self-esteem	28.667	3.317	3.286	0.046
Self-efficacy	31.750	2.363	1.732	0.182
Stress	13.750	7.136	-0.085	0.937
Program Satisfaction	44.500	4.203	0.225	0.836

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

Across the four variables studied, only one (self-esteem) appeared to be significantly impacted during the length of the study. Contrary to the researcher's hypothesis, participants' self-esteem decreased between the pre-test and post-test period. While this finding would appear to indicate that the support and discussion group negatively impacted participants' self-esteem, it is more likely that confounding variables are responsible for this difference. Mainly, the season (Winter) and time of the school year (end of the semester) during which the post-test was taken could have led to a decrease in the participants' self-esteem from pre-test to post-test. The results of the current study conflict with aforementioned research concluding that mentoring positively impacts a mentor's self-image and research noting the effectiveness of support groups in improving psychological well-being (Grima, et al., 2014; Thurman, et al., 2012; Kaye & Applegate, 1993; Murphy, 1996). The changes observed in the variables measured by this study also conflict with previously noted research claiming mentor training increases mentor satisfaction and reduce mentor difficulties, such as mentor stress (Tierney et al., 2000). While the

impact of the support group for mentors implemented in this study is contrary to related literature, this could be due to the limitations of the study, particularly small sample size.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include small sample size, short duration of study, non-experimental design, limitations associated with within-groups studies, and lack of experience and literature on the topic of utilizing a support group to impact mentors. Concerning the sample size of four, a sample of this size has very little statistical power and is unlikely determine any effects on the variables. The sample was also uncharacteristic of the current mentoring population. The population of mentors in the research is generally much older than the participants studied in this research project. Moreover, this study assumes the disadvantages associated with relying on self-report measures. Social desirability could have been a factor in completing the assessments of self-esteem, self-efficacy, stress, and program satisfaction. This could be especially true for this group of participants, as members of a socially conscious and proactive program which serves the local community. Furthermore, quantitative analysis of the BBBS survey may not have been appropriate since the alpha level was .25. Also, support group meetings could have been more impactful if they occurred more frequently, or if the overall length of the study was increased.

Future Research

Future research on this topic would need to utilize a much larger sample size and increase the frequency of meetings or duration of the study. An experimental design would be another significant improvement that would help clarify analysis and conclusions on the variables studied. For example, a control group would have improved this study by helping control for apparent confounding variables, such as season and time of semester during which the pre-test

and post-test were taken. Considering its alpha level in the present study, the BBBS survey should either be scored qualitatively or revised for stronger reliability before being used by future research. Since research on the topic of a support group for mentors is limited, further investigation needs to be performed before more research-driven strategies could be implemented. Accordingly, researchers performing similar studies should ensure their strategies are well-documented and falsifiable for the benefit of subsequent studies. Also, it may be beneficial to appoint a discussion leader with greater than three years of BBBS experience, as was the case with this project.

Implications

The greatest result of this study was illuminating a relatively non-existent topic in the literature. Although the research hypotheses of this study were not supported and results were largely not significant, this project served the purpose of introducing an original intervention that could beneficially impact the experience of mentors and mentees in BBBS and other mentoring systems. As previously indicated, more research needs to be conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of a support group-type intervention for mentors. However, such efforts could result in benefits to mentoring ability, mentoring satisfaction, and general well-being for mentors, mentees, and society at large by helping to raise and support generations of children and young adults.

Concerning mentoring intervention and support as a whole, problems with youth mentoring should be viewed as opportunities to improve, rather than indicators that youth mentoring is itself an ineffective practice. With its theorized and actual benefits, it seems that mentoring, when performed correctly, is a positive experience for both the mentor and mentee (Barnett, 1984; Dubois, et al., 2002; Tierney et al., 2000). Most difficulties associated with youth

mentoring can be related to implementation problems. This is reflected by the success of formal mentoring programs which seek to minimize the risk of logistical error by providing a more structured and regulated format for relationship.

If formal mentoring programs are going to progress, researchers need to continue investigative efforts similar to that of Murphy (1996) and others who have focused on the mentor's perspective. It is misguided to attempt to increase overall effectiveness by only appealing to and researching one half of the equation. As the uncovered part of the equation, the effects of mentoring on the mentor needs further research. Such an effort could positively impact future mentors and mentees in a way that benefits these individuals on a personal level and that benefits society at large.

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